

# Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat

OCTOBER 1984

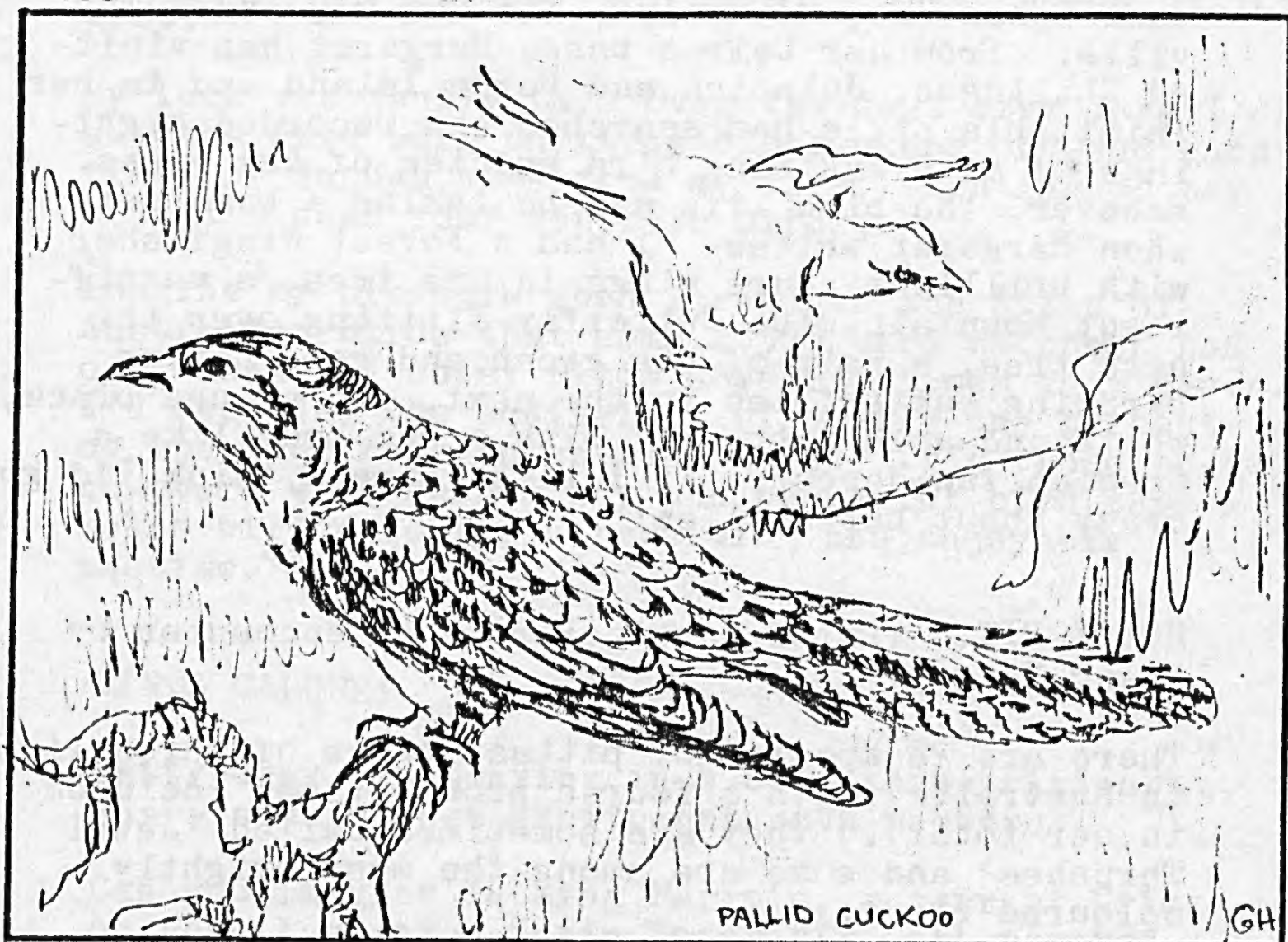
## EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting October 5 - Mr. R. Thomas "Cuckoos".

Meeting November 2 - Mr. P. Prevett "Mammal Survey Techniques".

Excursion October 7 - Linton - Mr. R. Thomas.

Excursion November 4 - Clunes Swamp, Mt. Beckworth  
- Mr. G. Binns.



PALLID CUCKOO

President: Miss H Burgess 312210  
Secretary: Miss J Binns 323670  
Treasurer: Mrs F Williamson 327631  
Editors: Mr G Binns 323670  
Mr L Fink 052 861319

Meetings, as specified, are held in the Art  
Building of the School of Mines and Industries,  
Lydiard Street South, Ballarat, commencing 7.30pm.  
EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM  
CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS,  
BALLARAT, AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTINGS.  
OR AT 1.30 pm FOR HALF DAY.

## NOTES FROM THE NORTH

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The past few months have seen a number of our members travelling to northern climes ( and who can blame them!) in search of new experiences in the field of natural history, and of course for well earned relaxation. The following notes are from communications from three members.

### MARGARET EN TOUR

Margaret Rotheram, on long service leave, has reported progress in her 'camper' through a series of rewarding stop-overs on her way to Cairns. These have included Goondiwindi, Macintyre Brook, Cunningham Gap, O'Reillys, Tin Can Bay and Townsville. From her Cairns base, Margaret has visited Chillagoe, Julattan and Heron Island and in her inimitable style has searched and recorded sightings of many exciting bird species of the areas. However, the bird life may be taking a back seat when Margaret writes- "I had a Forest Kingfisher with brilliant azure wings in one tree, a magnificent Mountain Blue Butterfly flitting over the next tree, a pair of big green and gold Cairns Birdwing Butterflies in the next, and a huge black, white and gold butterfly with a red body like a Spanish fan-dancer. If I lived here I think I'd go crazy about butterflies!"

NOISY PITTA (*Pitta versicolor*) - an encounter by Frank Harrap.

"There are 28 species of pittas, three of which live in Australia (with a fourth probably now included in our total). They are sometimes called 'Jewel Thrushes' and some are among the most brightly coloured birds.

The noisy pitta is one of the brightest with a chestnut head cap (the rest of the head is black), a brilliant glossy green back with an irridescent blue on the wing shoulders and on the rump. Below the black chin, the breast and belly are buff, leading to red in the lower belly and undertail coverts.

Up until 3 pm. on August 20 this year, all I'd seen of the bird were three glimpses of the electric blue rump as the bird flashed off into the gloom of the rainforest, where it has been described as fairly common in Queensland and N. and mid N.S.W.

And then, at Mt. Warning in far north N.S.W. I saw the bird well for the first time. There it was, perched on a branch, just in a patch of sunlight and some 8 metres away. I couldn't resist it - I said out loud, "You gorgeous little so-and-so!" I watched this little bird on and off for about fifteen minutes and managed to attract it even closer by whistling to it. Eventually it crossed the track in front of me and disappeared into the thick undergrowth.

My luck was really in. Over the next five days I saw the bird well on three other occasions and each time far enough away from my first sighting to say that I'd seen four separate birds.

Imagine my pleasure when I read in the Atlas of Australian Birds that some 2,500 bird watchers had only seen the Noisy Pitta some 530 times in 5 years. I'd recorded the equivalent of nearly one percent of the sightings in as many days. It's those encounters with such a shy and beautiful bird that makes bird watching a rewarding and enjoyable pastime."

## BIRDS GALORE!

Betty Gray, holidaying in N.S.W., has written to share some of her excitement with members:

"Can you imagine 14 King Parrots, a pair of Crimson Rosellas and a Satin Bower Bird all perched along the top of a fence, feeding on seed put in a long, shallow trough by the owner of the Opal Gallery at Merimbula? - and four Kookaburras laughing in unison on our front fence?



Merimbula, on the south coast of N.S.W. is a wonderful place for birds. I have identified 48 species and there are many others. Apart from the many common birds, we've been pleased to see a pair of Lyrebirds in Lind National Park, Regent Honeyeater, Superb Parrot, Rainbow Lorikeets, Brown Pigeon, Eastern Whipbird and Olive Backed Oriole. Strangely enough there isn't a pelican here this year; for the past three years there have been dozens.

Worth a mention are the glorious Golden and Coastal Wattles, fully out, in groves through the bush and along the roadsides. Casurinas in flower add another colour to the varied greens of the gums. Heath is quite prolific in its three colours and several Geebungs caught our roving eyes. The heathlands along the coast are a mass of flowering shrubs, with Banksias predominant."

#### A PLURALITY OF BIRDS

Words still survive in the English language (though not in general use) to describe gatherings of birds. You may find some of these quite descriptive and beautiful; -

- A seige of herons or bitterns
- A herd of swans, cranes or curlews
- A badelyng of ducks
- A spring of teal
- A cast of hawks
- A bevy of quail
- A covert of coots
- A congregation of plovers
- A whisp of snipe
- A flight of doves or swallows
- A murmuration of starlings
- An exultation of larks
- A chattering of choughs
- A host of sparrows

From Life: Book of Birds

## THREATENED PLANTS

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The speaker at the meeting held on 7 September was Mr. Neville Scarlett, Research Assistant, Botany Department, Latrobe University.

Mr. Scarlett explained that Dr. Parsons at Latrobe University and others were interested in recording the existence of certain rare and "threatened" plants in Australia. After discussing what is meant by the terms "rare" and "threatened", Mr. Scarlett spoke about species on the list of rare plants, which occurred (and might still occur) in the Ballarat Study Area. He showed pictures of most of the plants mentioned and told us of places where each might still be found. Club members were advised to look in old cemeteries and along fenced-in roads, where there has been little or no grazing and no top-dressing with superphosphate.

Among the plants mentioned by Mr. Scarlett were :-  
*Euphrasia scabra* (Fam. Scrophulariaceae)- found today only in the Victorian Alps.

*Glycine latrobeana* (Fam. Fabaceae) - this one of *Glycine* spp. found in Australia only. The cultivated soybean belongs to this genus.

*Psoralea parva* (Fam. Fabaceae) and *P. tenax*.

*Swainsonia* (Fam. Fabaceae) - this is an example of a whole genus that is rare. J. Willis lists 14 spp. in Victoria.

*Lepidium aschersonii* and *L. hyssopifolium* (Fam. Brassicaceae, formerly Cruciferae)

*Diuris palustris* (Fa., Orchidaceae)

*Rutidosia leptorrhynchoides* (Fam. Asteraceae, formerly Compositae)

*Leptorrhynchus elongatus* (Fam. Asteraceae, formerly Compositae)

Mr. Scarlett said that botanists would appreciate any information that Field Naturalists could obtain about any of the rare species.

H. Hooper

## THREATENED SPECIES BOOK

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Peter Durkin, Conservation Council of Victoria, 285 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, is in the editing stages of this publication and would be pleased to hear from readers with good quality photographs of any of the following: pine forest, polluted creek (rural), rabbit damage in bushland, highly developed rural land, eroding rural and bushland areas, chainsaw operator at logging site, fire damaged landscape from fuel reduction burning, a ski slope in summer, bat nest cave, aerial spraying of fertiliser or pesticides, Bustard, feral Cat, Masked Owl, Western Whip Bird, Regent Honeyeater, Little Tern or Freckled Duck, Dam and other River impediments, river improvement works, fish hatchery, and anything else that is related to animal or plant extinctions.

### REPORTS FROM SEPTEMBER MEETING

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R.Thomas - Pallid Cuckoo sighted at Sebastopol.

F.Harrap - Flock of Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoos at Mt.Helen. Starlings seem to be imitating B.Cockatoo calls.

H.Burgess - On recent trip; Glossy Black Cockatoo (N.S.W.), Regent and Satin Bower Birds (O'Reillys, Q.), Lotus Bird (Grafton, N.S.W.)

G. Jamieson - Bulldozing of vegetation, including significant stands of eucalypts and banksias in the Little Desert and Horseshoe Bend areas. Concern at pending policy on roadside vegetation clearance.

### A THOUGHT -

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Conservation begins with man's first realization that there is a tomorrow.



## SEPTEMBER EXCURSION

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For the excursion to Inverleigh Common, a small number of local members joined E.G. (Ted) Errey, Geelong Field Naturalists Club, at the entrance on the Teesdale-Inverleigh Road. The weather was a bit cool but under the tree cover, quite pleasant. Inverleigh Common consists of about 2600 acres of reserved forest and Crown Lands, 130 acres gravel reserve, 150 acres Golf Course and a rubbish depot. First set aside in 1866 as a timber reserve, then in 1872 as a firewood reserve, eventually it became the Inverleigh-Teesdale United Farmers Common.

Ecologically the area is very interesting. Bedrock is of Ordovician shales overlaid by Middle Tertiary Limestone Marl and up to 170 feet of non-marine upper Tertiary Pliocene sands, with some Newer Basalt flows covered by their recent sands, in the wooded areas.

Botanically the area is just as interesting. Over 220 native species, 50 introduced species, 10 families of 33 species of orchids being recorded. Dominant species in various areas were River Red Gum and Manna Gum with various Acacias, Teatree and Silver Banksia, as well as a good cover of smaller shrubs. Grasses alone make a well represented group.

Some fifteen mammals inhabit the area. Recent evidence of the presence of the Echidna, Eastern Grey Kangaroo and Swamp Wallaby was seen. The nocturnal fauna population includes possums, bats and gliders. Many fine habitat trees with plentiful hollows were noted.

Prolific bird life was observed throughout the area. In our exploration we noted several areas of mixed eucalypt plantations for test planting purposes. We saw two huge Red gums with good "crops" of Creeping Mistletoe (*Muellerina eucalypttoides*) - a very interesting sight. *Acacia armata*, *mearnsii* and *melanoxylon* were in fine bloom. *Banksia marginata* still had some flowers showing and we were fortunate to find a small patch of *Acianthus reniformes*, (Mosquito orchid) in bloom. A really wonderful natural

area, unfortunately controlled by two government departments and two shire councils, laid open to great human abuse by rubbish dumping, off road trail bikes, chain saw marauding and indiscriminate shooting to name a few of the most noticeable.

Thanks to Ted Errey for his guidance and to Geelong F.N.C. members for their studies and notations of the area resulting in the L.C.C. Reservation category.

P.Fry.

### SOME NOTES FOR THE DIARY

October 12-14 - W.V.F.N.C.A. Spring Camp Out, Grampians National Park. Details in September News Sheet.

October 13 - Spring meeting of Friends of Clarkesdale Reserve. 11 am. at The Hut.  
Remember - B.Y.O. equipment!

November 3-4 - "People in a Changing Landscape : Settlement of the Western District, from Prehistoric time to Present." Public Lecture Series and Field Excursion. Warnambool Performing Arts Centre. Cost \$12, \$6. (Brochures are available from our Secretary

November 16-17 - Roadsides' Conservation Committee, Workshop on Restoring Local Vegetation : focussing on problems, practical advice and assistance. Field Trip (Saturday) to inspect revegetation projects.  
Venue : Latrobe University. Enquiries to Kerry Willis, P.O.Box 41 East Melbourne, 3002.